



# Rice Report

Milwaukee County Supervisor Joseph Rice – 6<sup>th</sup> District  
901 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Courthouse RM 201, Milwaukee, WI 53233  
Phone: 414-278-4243 Fax: 414-223-1380  
E-mail: [jrice@milwcnty.com](mailto:jrice@milwcnty.com) Web: <http://www.Milwaukee.gov/Rice>



April 2008  
E-NEWS

*Dear Friends,*

*This E-Newsletter will provide you with updates regarding Milwaukee County matters, as well as inform you of my activities as your county representative. I hope you will find it informative and useful.*

*I wish to extend my thanks to you for providing me with an opportunity to represent you in county government. I hope you and your family look forward to taking advantage of all the opportunities Milwaukee County has to offer this upcoming Spring and Summer.*

*Sincerely,*

## Revising Milwaukee County's Ethics Code

**The Milwaukee County Ethics Code Study Committee, established on my initiative in June 2006 to address deficiencies of the current county Ethics Code, submitted its Final Report to the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors in October of 2007. Since then, the County Board met as a Committee of the Whole to discuss the proposed ordinance changes. They are as follows:**

- Adopt a new appointment process for the Milwaukee County Ethics Board to remove political considerations.
- Establish new rules banning political activity while engaged in official business.
- Create a “culture of compliance” by redefining ethical behavior.
- Establish a new protocol in cooperation with the Milwaukee County District Attorney’s office, to identify suspected criminal violations.
- Encourage settlements in the investigation and hearing process to avoid long and expensive adversarial proceedings.
- Establish a robust ethics education and training component for all county officials.
- Provide sufficient budgetary resources to the Ethics Board and staff to administer and enforce the law.

**The Milwaukee County Board Committee of the Whole referred the Final Report to the Committee on Judiciary, Safety and General Services, Milwaukee County Corporation Counsel, as well as the County Board Staff. Once the Judiciary Committee approves the changes, they will then be considered by the entire County Board.**



## Student Government Day At The Milwaukee County Board

Each year, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hosts Student Government Day, a day-long event where students from local high schools get a chance to learn about county government.

Students have the privilege to sit next to County Supervisors during the County Board Meeting and experience Milwaukee County government at work.

This year, Supervisor Rice hosted Matt McDonough, a student from Marquette University High School who lives in Whitefish Bay.



*Supervisor Rice with Matt McDonough who is currently a Sophomore at Marquette University High School at Student Government Day.*

## Become a Foster or Adoptive Parent



Every month, about 100 Milwaukee County children enter foster care. About 80% of them will be reunified with their parents once their safety and well-being in the home has been assured. In the meantime, the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW), which is responsible for their care, asks the community to provide safe and nurturing families.

We need foster homes for all kinds of children, but especially for sibling groups, infants and teens. You can work full time. You can be single, married, or partnered.

**May is National Foster Care Month.** Because placing children in homes where positive connections to schools, friends, and extended family can be maintained reduces trauma in children, recruiting city residents is desirable.

Please consider opening your heart and home to one of Milwaukee's children in need. Attend an orientation meeting to learn more about foster care and adoption.

Call **414-264-KIDS** for a schedule of orientation meetings or [click here](#).

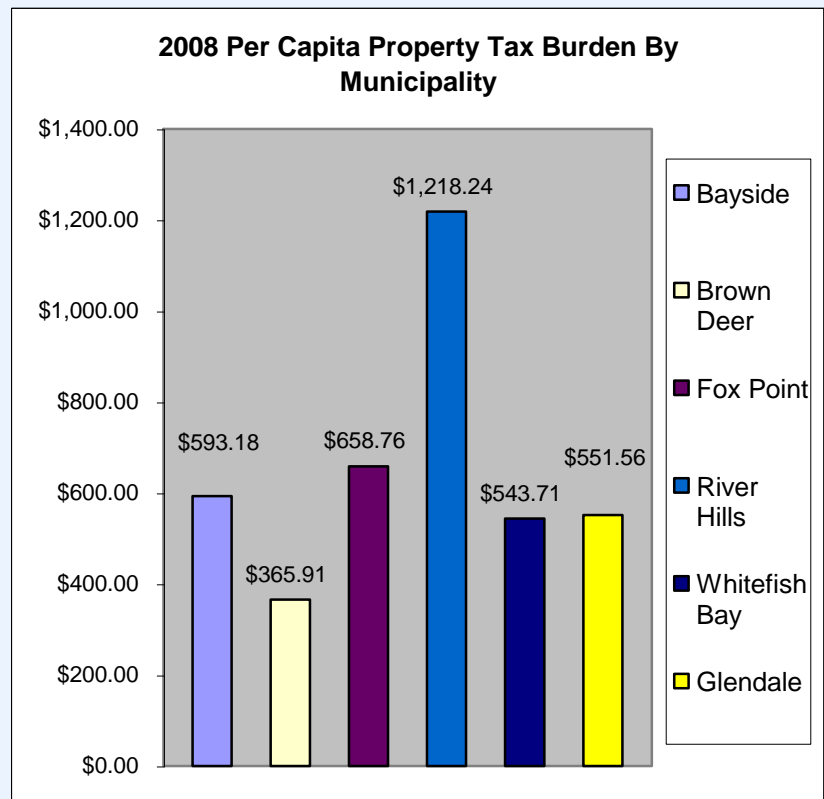
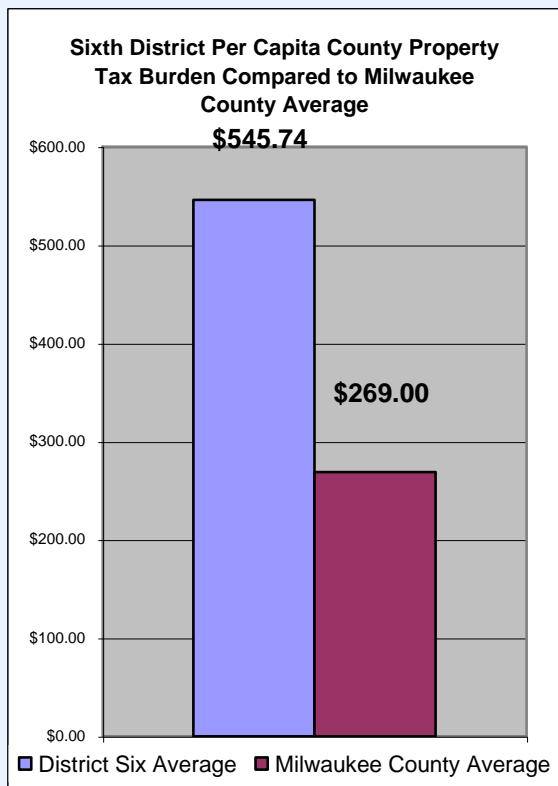


## 2008 Milwaukee County Budget

The Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors considered and adopted the Milwaukee County budget for 2008 in November of 2007. The total tax levy increase is \$8,842,104, which is an increase of 3.67% over the 2007 levy. As he has done the past several years, County Executive Walker introduced a Budget with no levy increase. The County Board added approximately \$14,404,184 in expenditures (Click [here](#) to view details).

I sided with County Executive Scott Walker on the majority of his vetoes (some vetoes did not impact the tax levy).

Please refer to the chart below outlining the per capita tax burden change in Sixth District municipalities, as well as how the tax levy of the Sixth District compares to the overall Milwaukee County tax levy.



*\* Data Source: Milwaukee County Department of Administrative Services*

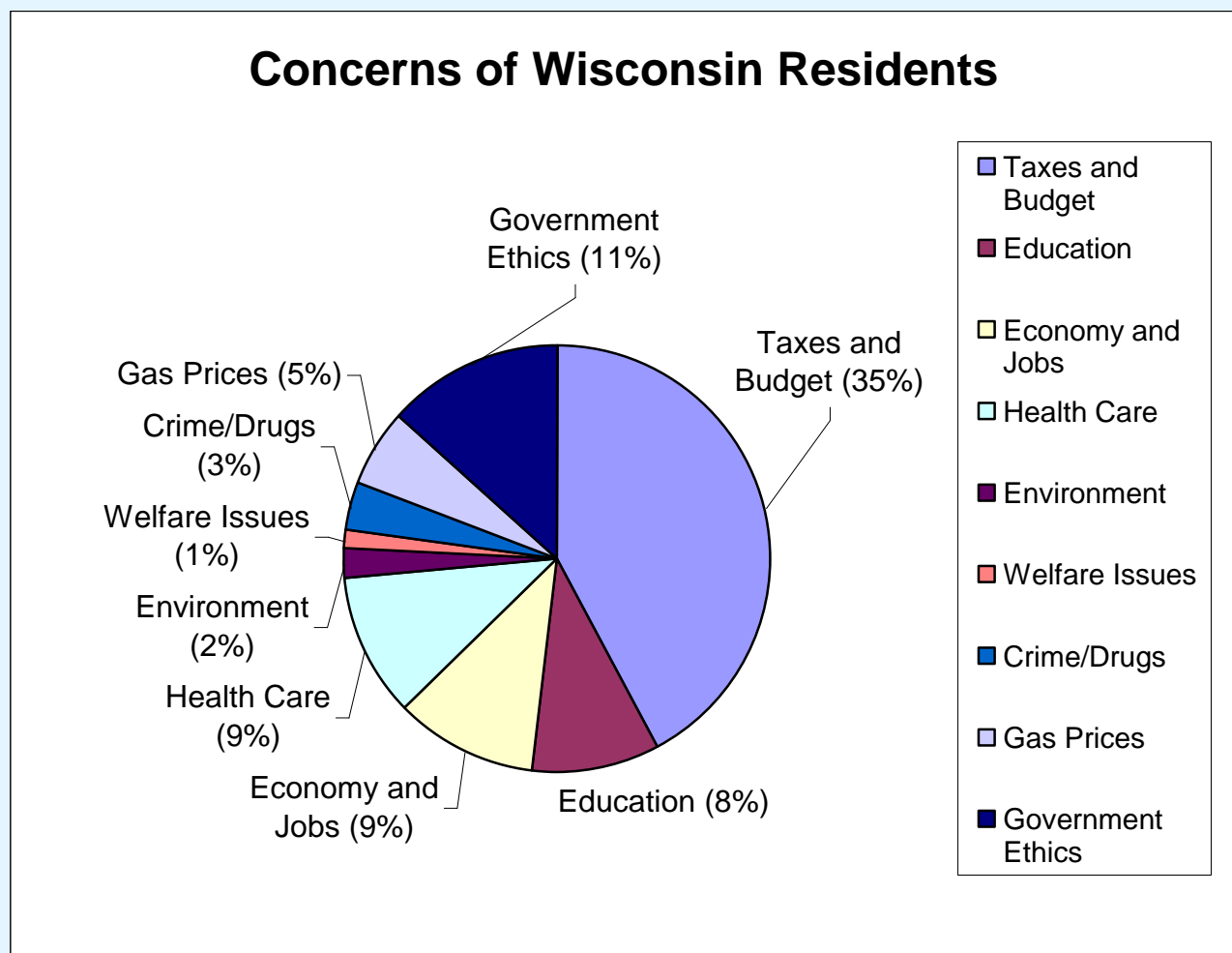
While there continue to be demands for many services in our community, I believe we need to balance these against the increasing tax burden we face. First-time home buyers and those on fixed incomes particularly feel this burden and, in some cases, it is causing out-migration from the county. Increased taxes have a negative effect on the economic development in the area. Too many entrepreneurs and developers already find the tax burden in Milwaukee County to be too high. Many more choose not to come to Milwaukee County for the same reason. This inhibits job growth and contributes to higher levels of unemployment.

As a legislative body under the existing constraints we ought to be innovative and find creative ways, rather than increase taxes, to overcome financial difficulties and provide necessary services to Milwaukee County residents.

## Addressing Wisconsin's Concerns

St. Norbert College has conducted an annual survey for the past several years asking state residents to identify the most pressing problem facing Wisconsin. An examination of the results of the most recent survey provides some striking illustrations of the public's attitudes about the direction of our state.

The two most important problems cited by survey respondents were **Taxes** and **Government Ethics**. Not surprisingly, given Wisconsin's high tax climate, 35 percent of respondents believe that taxes - specifically property taxes - are too high. Concern over the tax structure has risen steadily over the years. In a similar survey conducted a decade earlier, taxes were cited by only 18 percent as the most important problem facing the State (see the complete St. Norbert College survey results by clicking [here](#).)



*\* St. Norbert College, The Wisconsin Survey, November 8, 2007.*

Consistent with these results, the constituent survey I conducted last year revealed that 74 percent of the Sixth District residents believe property taxes in Milwaukee County are too high. As your representative, I have done my level best to represent your views in my votes on county budget matters. I reject the idea that increased taxes are the answer to county budget challenges. Rather, I believe we need to find ever more creative ways to deliver services and decrease the cost of government if we are to bring new businesses and jobs to Milwaukee.



## Addressing Wisconsin's Concerns (cont'd)

The second biggest problem, according to survey respondents, was Government Ethics and Politics. The survey reported a significant increase in the concern over this issue from previous years. Unfortunately at the state and local level we have seen a number of scandals and criminal prosecutions of elected officials, calling into question the integrity of our government. It is critical in a representative democracy for the public to have faith that those they elect will place their public responsibilities above their personal interests.

Ethics reform has been a priority issue for me on the Milwaukee County Board. During my term in office, I obtained passage of a new law regulating county lobbyists in Milwaukee County. These reforms brought about greater transparency in the overall lobbying process by establishing a system of registration and reporting by those seeking to influence legislative or administrative action by county elected and appointed officials.

I also chaired the Milwaukee County Ethics Code Study Committee, a body created to revise the Milwaukee County Code of Ethics. Over the past year, that committee has researched comparable codes in other jurisdictions and considered recommendations for creating a better, more effective Ethics Code. After much hard work and careful deliberation, the committee has issued a final report and recommended series of changes to the current code. These changes aim to create a culture of ethics and compliance in county government.

A copy of the Committee's report can be found by clicking [here](#).

## Park East Development



*County Executive Scott Walker, The Brewery Project President John Kersey, Brewery Project Vice President Tom Bernacchi and Supervisor Rice at the signing of the Park East Parcel Resolution.*

On March 24, 2008 County Executive Scott Walker signed a resolution authorizing the sale of county owned land in the Park East to Brewery Project, LLC, which will use the site to construct a traffic roundabout that will better manage and facilitate vehicular flow in the area.

The development is intended for residential, office, and retail use. It is expected to provide a positive economic impact and rejuvenate the Milwaukee Downtown area as this neighborhood comes to life with homes, shops, offices and restaurants.

## In Celebration of Trees

*Saturday, April 19 @ 10 a.m.-4 p.m.*

*Sunday, April 20 @ Noon-4 p.m.*

Visit Whitnall Park to celebrate and learn about trees. A variety of activities from lectures, to hikes, to a program with the Can Man make this a family-friendly event. Programs will be held at Boerner Botanical Gardens, Wehr Nature Center, and locations in between.

**2008 Admission:** \$1 per person

## Astronomy: Observing at the Observatory

*Observing the Moon and Deep Sky Objects*

*Froemming Park, 8801 S. 51 St., 1/4 mile north of Ryan Road*

Join members of the Wehr Astronomical Society for deep sky viewing with telescopes provided by club members. You are also welcome to bring your own binoculars and telescopes. If the weather brings totally overcast skies or winds greater than 30 miles per hour, the session will be canceled.

**Free and open to the public 2 Fridays per month!**

## Mother's Day Native Plant Sale

*Mother's Day Weekend*

*Sat.-Sun., May 10 & 11, 2008, 9am-3:30pm*

*Plan your landscape now with the [Early Order Form](#)*

Find just the right plants for your home's natural landscaping. Not only do these plants beautify your landscape, but also they provide the blossoms and seeds that attract birds and butterflies. Knowledgeable staff will assist you in plant selection, and literature will be available to provide additional information on natural landscaping topics.

Plants from a local nursery will be featured. Items for sale include spring ephemerals, prairie plants, woodland plants, and a few wetland plant species. Nursery-grown native wildflowers will be sold in 4-inch pots. The plants have been grown 2-5 years and are now of transplant size. Add some color to your native planting or restoration area this year.

**For detailed information regarding park activities throughout the whole year, please visit:**  
**[Year-at-Glance Milwaukee County Parks 2008 Calendar.](#)**

## Milwaukee County Transit System Funding Dilemma

### Don't be fooled: A sales tax isn't the only answer

By Milwaukee County Supervisor JOSEPH A. RICE

*From the March 9, 2008 Edition of the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*

Faced with costs rising faster than revenue, the debate over Milwaukee County's transit service needs has devolved into a political Hobson's choice - either cut service or create a new dedicated sales tax.

That's a false choice.

"Find new revenue" should not be the default answer to each and every budget challenge. And an increase in the county sales tax is not the only available option. In fact, moving in that direction would be both ill-advised and unnecessary.

. . . read more [here](#).

If you wish to be removed from this list please reply to this e-mail and write **“unsubscribe”** in the Subject column.